



The President's Daily Brief

January 19, 1976

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY



LEBANON

Prime Minister Karami's statement yesterday that he intends to resign could cause the collapse of most remaining government authority and lead to an all out battle between the Lebanese army and the Palestinians. The cease-fire announced over the weekend never really went into effect; fighting continued in Beirut as well as to the south.

President Franjiyah will come under great pressure from Syria and moderate Lebanese politicians--both Christian and Muslim--to ask Karami to stay. Karami, a Muslim, has been the only effective brake on Interior Minister Shamun's strategy of unrestrained use of the army. In return for staying, Karami would probably demand that President Franjiyah promise to halt the growing use of the Lebanese armed forces and to force the Phalangists to end their attacks on Palestinian and leftist positions in Beirut and resume serious political negotiations.

Franjiyah has several alternatives to retaining Karami. He could appoint a weak Sunni Muslim prime minister, install a predominantly military cabinet or rule by presidential decree. The Syrians, Palestinians, and Lebanese leftists would oppose any of these moves, making it impossible for a government thus formed to negotiate an end to the crisis in Lebanon.

Heavy fighting continued in Beirut despite the cease-fire announced by Karami over the weekend. Christian militia forces attacked a Muslim district on the waterfront in an effort to establish a supply route across the Beirut River and Muslim militiamen tried to dislodge Phalangist forces in the downtown hotel district. The international airport remains closed.

(continued)

Muslim leftists aided by Palestinians skirmished with rightist Christians aided by Lebanese army elements south of Beirut at Damour and several nearby Christian towns. Scattered fighting also occurred in the Tripoli-Zagharta area in the north and the Bekaa Valley to the east of Beirut.

A battalion and two antiaircraft companies of the Palestine Liberation Army crossed into northern Lebanon from Syria over the weekend,

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ANGOLA

The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola apparently is shifting its military operations southward following the collapse of the National Front for the Liberation of Angola in the north.

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Heavy fighting is taking place in central Angola between Popular Movement troops, supported by Cuban men and artillery, and the forces of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola. The National Union has been weakened by the withdrawal of South African troops from combat areas.



USSR

There was little change in the position of Soviet ships in the western Mediterranean and African waters over the weekend.

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The landing ship and oiler, which have been located southwest of Abidjan, Ivory Coast, for the past four days, began moving southeast over the weekend back toward an area off Pointe Noire.

The Kresta - II class cruiser and the Kotlin class destroyer remain at sea in the vicinity of Conakry. Two F-class submarines still are with the Sverdlov class cruiser in the Alboran Basin where they have been since Friday. A Soviet Kashin class destroyer monitored the rotation of US carrier groups in the Gulf of Cadiz on Saturday and has now entered the Mediterranean.

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USSR-EGYPT



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NOTES

Guarded Soviet optimism about Secretary Kissinger's coming trip to Moscow was evident in a Pravda article published yesterday.

The article, by one of the paper's regular news analysts, said constructive action on strategic arms limitations negotiations is "the touchstone of the genuine intentions" of each side. It added that new progress is possible only on the basis of earlier agreements.

* * *

Apparently responding to "heavy pressure" from Athens, Greek Cypriot negotiator Clerides withdrew his resignation Saturday, thus removing one of the obstacles to a resumption of intercommunal talks in Vienna next month.

Clerides refused to spell out publicly his reasons for resigning in the first place. If the stalled talks are to resume as scheduled, there will have to be similar pressure from Ankara on Turkish Cypriot negotiator Denktash. UN Secretary General Waldheim is worried that the talks may be scuttled altogether if the Turks are backing away from their agreement with the Greeks last month to reopen the talks without preconditions.

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